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Senate approves creation of drug treatment courts

LANSING – Legislation allowing the creation of drug treatment courts and juvenile drug treatment courts passed the Senate today, said Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton.

The courts would offer supervised treatment programs for people who abused or were dependent on alcohol or a controlled substance. The program would integrate alcohol and other drug treatment with justice system case handling.

“Creating drug treatment courts is a great addition to our justice system,” said Patterson, one of the bill sponsors. “Providing necessary treatment to drug users under court supervision ensures they are properly treated and are not a threat to society.”

People admitted to such programs could not be violent offenders or have a weapons violation. Those admitted would have their criminal histories reviewed and must be deemed to not be a substantial risk to the public.

Patterson said drug treatments courts also would save taxpayers money. While the cost of housing a prisoner with substance-abuse problems costs between \$20,000 and \$50,000 a year with an additional \$80,000 for building the prison cell, drug court costs run between \$2,500 and \$4,000 per offender annually, according to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Additionally, the association reports the recidivism rate for those who complete drug court programs ranges from 4 percent to 29 percent as opposed to 48 percent for regular prisoners.

Senate Bills 998 -1000 now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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